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ABSTRACT

In this working paper which is being revised as part of a curriculum manual for later publication, the prevention and treatment of some classroom problems are summarized. Some guidelines are provided for teachers of preschool classes, dealing with the importance of consistent routines, of allowing the child a choice in his classroom work, and of avoiding confusion and frustration when tasks are too difficult for the child. Aggression, defiance or withdrawal are less likely to occur as children learn new concepts and are more in control of their feelings. The four chapters are headed: I. Developing Impulse Control Through the Daily Routine; II. Classroom Structure and Impulse Control; III. Teacher Planning Can Prevent "Management" Problems; and IV. Classroom Hints. (For related documents, see PS 006 089, 090, and 092-094.) (RG)

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CHILD MANAGEMENT

In the Cognitive Preschool Model

High/Scope Educational Research
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THIS IS A WORKING COPY. It is being revised for inclusion in a curriculum manual we hope to publish in 1972.

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HIGH/SCOPE EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH FOUNDATION
PRESCHOOL DEPARTMENT

CHILD MANAGEMENT IN THE COGNITIVE PRESCHOOL MODEL

"Kevin won't share."

"Billy cries and kicks when he can't get his way."

"Joanne doesn't want to sit in the circle with the rest of the group."

"Terry won't do anything for more than two minutes."

"Brian throws the blocks and hits people."

These are some of the "child management" problems Head Start teachers describe as they try to run classes where children can learn and have fun.

The Cognitive Model provides some guidelines teachers have found useful for the prevention and treatment of some of these problems.

I. Developing Impulse Control Through the Daily Routine

A. Importance of a Consistent Routine

A consistent daily routine aids the development of impulse control; when the child can predict what will happen next in the day, it is easier for him to plan, make choices and think before acting.

The teacher can make the routine an effective aid by making it consistent from day to day and by talking with the children about the different parts of the day. Problems during transitions can be avoided by having active ways for the children to move from one period to the next. Waddling like a duck, pretending to be a ball rolling across the room, or hopping on one leg are some active and "fun" ways for children to make the transition from one time period to the next. If changes in the routine are necessary (because of field trips, parties, the weather, etc.), they should be discussed with the group.

B. Planning, Work, Evaluation Sequence

If this sequence is followed it can help a child learn to predict the outcome of his acts and to become responsible for the choices he has made. During Planning Time the child makes a decision or choice about what he wishes to do. Work Time provides the child with an opportunity to carry out his plan, and Evaluation Time gives him the chance to talk with others about what he has done.

Allowing the child to choose his own activities means that the child will be doing things that interest him, and this is the best insurance against child management problems.

The teacher's role during the three-part sequence is to help the child to see that his plans can be translated into action. Using the planning board and "tags" helps the child to become aware of his decisions and to remember them. Evaluation time, skillfully led by the teacher, can be a time when the child feels satisfaction from having completed his plan and gains information and ideas from others about ways to extend his work. Presenting choices to children rather than commands is very effective in eliminating "conflicts of wills" between teacher and child.

II. Classroom Structure and Impulse Control

The classroom is set up to encourage children to work in areas and with equipment that interests them. Only materials that can be handled and used by the children are placed in the work areas. Since the basic areas are stable, the children can make plans based on their growing knowledge of each area and what it contains. New equipment is added gradually to allow time for exploration and discovery. Equipment is placed at a height easily reached by children.

The teacher's role is to help the children learn about the many things to do in each area. It is her responsibility to see that the children are not frustrated by inaccessible objects or by toys which are easily broken or overly complex.

III. Teacher Planning Can Prevent "Management" Problems

Many classroom problems occur because children are either not sufficiently challenged or are confused and frustrated by

concepts or tasks which are too difficult for them. One way the Cognitive Model attempts to reduce these possibilities, as we have just seen, is by permitting children to choose, from a set of alternatives, what it is that they want to do and where they want to work.

Another way we attempt to make activities more appropriate for each child is through the planning that the teacher does, using the curriculum framework. The teacher makes sure that she has planned an action component to the learning experiences. Children are doing things, not just watching or listening to the teacher. They work with real things as well as pictures and other symbols. They go on field trips and represent these experiences in various ways when they return. They investigate and learn about things, animals, people, their community. These experiences are planned so as to be as interesting to each child as possible.

We have found that when children are excited about what they are learning and doing they are less likely to be "management" problems. As children learn new concepts and ways of describing their world and their feelings, they feel more in control, it becomes less likely that they will feel the need to be aggressive, defiant, or withdrawn.

IV. Classroom Hints

1. It is often more effective to pay attention to the child and praise him when he is doing something constructive than to focus on his undesirable behavior.

2. If children are not following your classroom rules and procedures you might try to

   a. make the rules simpler and demonstrate what you mean.

   b. be more specific. A child may not yet know what you mean by "clean up the block area" but may be able to "put the bigger blocks on this shelf."

   c. keep the rules and expectations consistent. Don't change them from day to day. Children frequently test new rules to see if they will

be enforced. A consistent rule or procedure predictably enforced gives children a feeling of security. They know what the rule is and they understand the consequences of not following it. A few easily enforced rules are more effective than many rules which change constantly because they cannot be enforced.

3. Help children learn about the consequences of their acts. This gives adult rules and requests a purpose to the child and helps him learn to become responsible and independent.

4. Give the child information about why you like or disapprove of what he is doing. Statements like "that's nice" or "only bad girls do that" convey little precise information about what you had in mind.

5. Children should be encouraged to express their feelings in words. A child's anger is a very real feeling and should be discussed.

6. Children can learn to settle many disagreements among themselves, without the teacher's intervention.

7. Remember that you are a model for the children. If you shout across the room it is hard for a child to understand why he should not shout.

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